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David Rose

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HARDING COLLEGE LIVING HISTORY OF MISSIONS

Volume II, No. 6

This is Volume II, No. 6 of the Harding College Living History of Missions. I am Evertt Huffard, visiting professor of missions at Harding College, and shall be interviewing David Rose from Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Huffard: David, would you tell us about how long you have been in Brazil?

Rose: My wife and I moved to Brazil in the fall of 1967 which gives us about three and a half years in the work there.

Huffard: Tell us something about Sao Paulo. Tell us something about the city.

Rose: Sao Paulo is the fifth largest city in the world at the present time, housing over 8 million people, growing at a tremendous rate. There are people moving into Brazil from all countries of the world, the United States included. The country itself is experiencing a three percent growth rate per year.

Huffard: What's the history of the beginning of the church there?

Rose: In the early 1930's two families were sent to the city of Sao Paulo to establish the church there. They had not been there long when they were converted to Pentacostalism. One of these families is still quite active in the Pentacostal hierarchy, is quite a ranking figure even today in that movement in Brazil, which incidentally is growing at a tremendous rate, claiming a growth membership of one million over the last 25 years.

Nothing further was done by the churches of Christ until 1957 when Arlie Smith was sent to the city of Sao Paulo to begin the church there. In 1961 a mission team comprised of 14 families arrived in the city of Sao Paulo in the month of June. They began their work shortly thereafter and to date have established some six strong congregations in the city of Sao Paulo, have a youth camp, a preacher training school, have written a correspondence course, are participating in the World Radio broadcast and a number of other worthwhile projects. The Operation '68 group also went to Brazil in 1967. They are presently some 8 or 9 families strong. The follow up team of which I am coordinator began in 1967 in the fall with 4 young people being recruited to enter an intensive language training program and then to begin following up on contacts that have been made as a result of World Radio broadcasts and the correspondence course contacts. At that particular time there were approximately 7000 people enrolled in the Bible course. Today, there are almost 30,000 and over 7000 have already graduated from the course.

Huffard: In all of Brazil, there are about how many Christians?

Rose: In all of Brazil there are about 1300 members of the church.

Huffard: And in Sao Paulo?

Rose: In Sao Paulo there are roughly 500 or 600.

Huffard: Would you give us something of an idea of the religious background of the people there?

Rose: There are basically two types of people who came to Brazil. The Portuguese, of course, discovered Brazil and primarily colonized and settled it. They were also joined by Spanish, Italian and other European peoples. They had slavery in Brazil until 1889 and the slave brought with him his religions from Africa. These religions are still practiced to a certain extent today having been mixed in with Catholicism. So the Brazilian people, because of intermarriage and inter-cultural exchanges, have a very sensitive spot when it comes to religion and are quite responsive when religion is discussed with them.

Huffard: Now, from which of these two groups have most of the converts come?

Rose: It would be hard to say because basically there are not two groups in Brazil any more. There has been such a tremendous amount of inter-cultural exchange and intermarriage of the races that a Brazilian today is actually a person who is a European who married an Indian, a native of the lands that were being colonized.

Huffard: No sort of class system then?

Rose: No. As far as having racial differences there are no racial differences. There are class distinctions. Ten percent of Brazilians are rich; ninety percent of them are of some form of poor, ranging from extremely poverty stricken to almost middle class.

Huffard: From which of these have most of the converts come?

Rose: Since the majority of your people are poor, of course, naturally, you would have more from that. However, we do have men in the church there who have had jobs that have paid as much as \$25,000 or \$30,000 a year on down to people who make \$30 to \$40 a month.

Huffard: Have you had any problems in fitting into the culture of the people there?

Rose: Basically not. The people respect Americans quite a bit. If an American goes to Brazil and tries to live on a very low standard of living, the Brazilians are quite apt to wonder what's wrong with him and why he couldn't make it in his own country. Living on the scale of a poor Brazilian would be a sign of failure rather than as a sign of success which we sometimes think of here in the States.

The adaptation in Brazil is not difficult, in my opinion, because many things there are similar to what they are here. They have things in their culture that are quite pleasant and come as quite a pleasant surprise at times and yet at the same time quite different than what we have here. Latin Americans are very congenial people and are very enjoyable to live and work with.

Huffard: Would you want to name any one thing as the hardest thing to become accustomed to in Brazil that is so different from the United States?

Rose: In Brazil, in the work there in teaching the Bible, interpreters, as far as I know, are never used unless it is in the case of a visiting preacher or visiting elder. We have done this in the past--translated for an elder and let him say a few words of exhortation to a congregation. Primarily though the basic thing that I would list as being the hardest to overcome is learning a foreign language. I had not have previous language study with the exception of a couple of years of Latin in high school which were very light courses. The hardest thing I can truthfully say I have ever done in my life is learn a foreign language.

Huffard: How long did it take you before you could preach in the language?

Rose: We had been in language study five months before we actually began our work. We had intensive classes up until five months and then quit our classes completely and went out and began practicing what we had been taught. The beginning, of course, was very difficult and we were not what you might say "fluid" in our speech. It wasn't as flowing as we would like for it to have been but at least it was a beginning. The best way to get it then after you have the basics is to get out and just mix and mingle with the people and practice what you have.

Huffard: Are you doing any study aside from just the practice of it at the present time?

Rose: One of the best ways to continue studying is to read daily newspapers, magazines and other materials that come out that are current in Portuguese. We do not recommend continued study of the textbook unless it be as an occasional reference to check on a grammatical construction to make sure that you are doing it correctly. That doesn't mean to say, however, that a person should not continually strive to improve himself. Most of us probably have the habit of interrupting ourselves sometimes in sentences to correct a grammatical mistake that we might make. Sometimes we are even kidded about it.

Huffard: What is the most outstanding method you are using now in reaching people for Christ?

Rose: The follow up which we have been talking about here, which I am primarily concerned with, is a quiet natural outreach of a combined program of radio preaching, correspondence course with those who have been preached to through the radio and then by following up on those who write us and ask for further teaching of God's word. The follow up team has been what you might call a mobile missions unit. We have traveled a fairly large area in the country of Brazil from place to place and some 25 small churches have been established as a result of this work in the last three years.

Huffard: What type of radio lessons do you find appropriate for the people there? Is it very strong doctrinally or just what is your approach?

Rose: The present approach is a verse by verse study of the New Testament. When the programming began in 1966, they began in the book of Matthew and are presently in the book of Philipians or Thessalonians. I can't remember for sure.

Huffard: Is all of this done by one man?

Rose: Up until 1970 all of this had been done by Glen Owen. John Pennisi at the present is the radio speaker since Glen has returned to the States.

Huffard: How many letters do you get a day or a week from this? Do you have any idea?

Rose: We get 80 to 100 every day.

Huffard: Most of them asking for correspondence courses or questions?

Rose: We can break this 100 down into basically three categories. Twenty of these would be new enrollments. Another 40 would probably be people sending their lessons back in to be corrected and, of course, wanting additional lessons sent to them. An

additional 20 would be letters of general nature, writing in congratulating us on the work that we are doing, asking Bible questions or asking for printed sermons. The Sunday sermons which are half an hour in length as compared to the 15 minute daily series are printed and available upon request.

Huffard: Do you have any opposition at all to your radio discussions?

Rose: No, we do not. The constitution of the country guarantees complete religious freedom. It is strictly forbidden, for example, for any religious group to publicly attack another religious group by name.

Huffard: How about the following up on those that are baptized? I believe I heard you say there were several churches now existing. Do you have a program to strengthen the nationals in their faith and so on?

Rose: Yes. Our follow up objectives are two prong. Number one, to baptize those who write in and request it. Many times they request that we help them start the church in their city. Many times these people are ready to do all that they can to influence neighbors, relatives and friends of theirs to accept the truth as well. These people begin meeting in their living room and these congregations that I mentioned are quite small. They may be as small as two and range on up to 100.

Huffard: Do you have any type of preacher training program?

Rose: In the city of Sao Paulo a preacher training school has been in existence now for one year. They are half way through and they are using basically the same set up as many preacher training schools would here in the United States except that all courses, of course, are being taught in Portuguese. There are 15 people in the preacher training school at the present time. They will be graduating in March of next year.

Huffard: How do you support the training school? Where does the money come from?

Rose: The training school is supported entirely by funds from the United States.

Huffard: Do you have any graduates yet of the school? Oh, you said it was just one year.

Rose: Right. They have just finished the first year and one more year to go.

Huffard: Do you have any of the national preachers that are on American salary?

Rose: In the city of Sao Paulo there are no national preachers that I know of on American salary. There is one man in the city of San Joao do Rio Preto who receives partial support from the United States. I also understand that some Brazilian workers who work with Allen Dutton in the city of Porto Alegre receive at least partial or perhaps total support. I don't have any figures on that to be specific.

Huffard: Do you feel that the reaction of the people is favorable or unfavorable either way on American support for the preachers?

Rose: There are many advantages and disadvantages and often the decision that is made in regard to American money or to strictly national money simply boils down to the fact of just having to make a hard decision. The possibilities, of course, for

national Christians, since there are only 1200 and a good many of them as we pointed out earlier are from poorer class of people, are not good for the church at this time to take on the full support of a number of preachers because they simply just don't have the income to pay. It's not that they don't give; they just don't make enough money.

Huffard: Is there any sort of nationalistic spirit that would feel that a national has sold out who would take foreign support?

Rose: At the present time there is no such feeling existing that I know of in this respect. It is possible that in the future a feeling such as this could arise. Americans at the present are quite well thought of and quite highly respected.

Huffard: How many Americans do you have at the present time in Sao Paulo?

Rose: The group that works primarily in the city at the present time has 8 or 9 families. The follow up team which also live in the city of Sao Paulo has at the present time 9 workers with some 7 more scheduled to arrive within the next 12 months.

Huffard: Have you divided up the work among these two groups with certain responsibilities or do all generally work pretty well at the same job?

Rose: No. The group that went to Sao Paulo in 1961 basically works in the city. Of course, the follow up team basically works out of the city.

Huffard: I would like to ask about group activity. Do you feel that this is better than someone going alone or perhaps a pair going into a field?

Rose: I don't think that anyone, even under favorable circumstances, should go by themselves. By this I mean one family. I feel that at least two families should go. There are a number of problems that arise in a man's life and in the life of his family that he is going to need help, encouragement or at least social contact with those that share like feelings with him. I think group activity is quite profitable from that standpoint.

Huffard: In your group activity do the nationals feel they may be excluded from the Americans or do you generally have your friends among the nationals too?

Rose: It is easy for an American to go to a foreign place where there is a large group of Americans such as is in Sao Paulo and have almost exclusively American friends. However, this is a tendency that one has to be careful to avoid or you can get the name of being unknown among the national people.

Huffard: Does the national take an active part in the worship with the Americans or do the Americans conduct the services? Does the national feel that he is smothered in this type thing or not?

Rose: As far as I know I have not ever heard any Brazilian say that he felt smothered or that his talents were not being developed. It could be that I am unaware of some sentiment to that extent, but I have not ever heard that expressed. It is my opinion, and I think this is shared by most of the men working there in the city of Sao Paulo, that the nationals should be trained as soon as possible to conduct the worship services themselves. In the city of Sao Paul a good bit of the preaching is still done by the American but all of the other responsibilities are given as much as possible to

the national people. A men's business meeting at most of these congregations, for example, makes the decision as to how the arrangement is made. If the national business meeting makes the decision that they want one of the American missionaries to continue to do their full time preaching, then, of course, that's their decision.

Huffard: Is each of the families supported by a different congregation under different oversight or do you have one congregation overseeing all of the work there?

Rose: There is no single congregation overseeing the work in general. The congregation that supports me is the Southside church in Fort Worth is basically overseeing the follow up work. They are the only congregation that I know of that is overseeing a particular work. Some other congregations have had a real leading role in helping to develop financially some of the other aspects of the work in Sao Paul, but there has never been any one church that oversaw the entire work. Most of them are supported by a multiplicity of congregations and interestingly enough this arrangement has worked quite well. The men have worked quite well together.

Huffard: On your projects there such as your correspondence courses and your radio program, how are they financed and who oversees them?

Rose: The radio broadcast is managed by the elders at the White's Ferry Road church of Christ in West Monroe, Louisiana and is supported by funds from there. The radio programming as such does not cost the church money. The money was loaned from the United States to a Brazilian foundation to purchase these radio stations so that the church could have free air time. Of the 23 stations that were originally purchased, some 13 were sold because of duplication in some cities and some that were complete losses financially, etc. There are 15 stations that are still blanketing the same area with the coverage that was originally had with the 23 stations.

The correspondence course is sponsored by the Broadway church in Paducah, Kentucky. Dale Brown is the director of the course. Dale, however, is supported by the Crieve Hall church in Nashville.

Huffard: Do all of you unite your efforts to reach the prospect?

Rose: Yes.

Huffard: What is your greatest problem in raising support or maybe you don't have any problem in this respect?

Rose: I think my greatest problem is probably shared by most who try to raise funds and that is finding the right congregation at the right time with the right money. It is sometimes very difficult to get the three factors together.

Huffard: Since so many congregations are involved and the work is reasonably new, has there been a great deal of fall out of support of congregations in that length of time?

Rose: I would say that there has been a relatively small amount of fall out.

Huffard: Would you give a reason for this?

Rose: I think when a person raises money as well as he being picked by a congregation to be supported, I think the individual should pick the congregation that is going to support him. There are congregations who are probably not quite as capable maybe of

taking on a project as the preacher, for example, would like for them to be. I think it is very important that an individual as well as being supported by a congregation, he needs to feel that this congregation is really capable of doing the job that he wants to do. It works both ways in getting support.

Huffard: How many churches have their own buildings now?

Rose: The Nove de Julho congregation, which is the largest, completed their building in 1968. However, I understand they still have a \$15,000 loan to the States. This was the portion that the Brazilian members agreed to pay. The entire cost of that particular structure runs in the neighborhood of \$300,000. I don't have the exact figure.

The Campo Grande congregation also in the city of Sao Paulo recently paid for its building. They paid for half of the actual cost of the building and the other half of the cost was supplied by congregations here in the States. They just recently paid off the notes for that, so it is completely debt free at the present time.

The congregation of Jardim das Floris which is in a poorer part of town was paid for, as I understand it, almost entirely by American funds.

The Ipiranga congregation is renting a building and I understand the members are paying the rent on this building.

The Vila Maria church, I do not have the details on that. I do know American money was used in purchasing this building.

There is another church in the city of San Joao do Rio Preto, where as we mentioned previously, a Brazilian preacher is partially supported by American funds. They have owned their building for a number of years, but I do understand that the money did come from the United States for that.

Huffard: Who holds the titles to these buildings, the property? The local church or American church? Do you know?

Rose: In all instances I do not know. In a number of the churches where the church has had a major role in paying for the building, I feel fairly sure that the Brazilian members hold the title to the structure.

Huffard: What future do you look forward to for the work in Brazil?

Rose: Brazil is in its renaissance at the present time, coming out of what we might term the Dark Ages. It is becoming more and more industrialized, more and more developed. I anticipate that probably materialism will eventually overtake the work there in Brazil as it has in Europe and the United States and some other areas. I don't look for this to happen, say within the next five years. I think that the situation as good as it is now could perhaps continue from 10 to 30 years, depending on how stable the government continues to be. Brazil has really a stable government. I don't really anticipate any problems from that.

Huffard: Do you have a need for more workers there now?

Rose: Yes. That's the purpose of my being here on the campus.

Huffard: Tell us something about it.

Rose: We are continually recruiting people to go. We have an annual recruiting trip that includes some eleven Christian colleges here in the United States. Also during the school months we put ads in the campus newspapers. Almost every month we have an article or two in the World Radio News and some other brotherhood publications. In the spring months after our recruiting trip is over, we send a letter every two to three weeks to those who indicated a serious interest in the work there in Brazil encouraging them to make a decision to come. We are continually needing people. Our minimum commitment is two years and when two years is up if a person is not re-committed or perhaps wants to go back to school or something, then replacements have to be secured for them.

Huffard: What type of training would you say would be good for young people in college in making preparation to go to Brazil?

Rose: Two factors that I consider very important to doing a successful mission work are having a good solid Bible background. By this I don't necessarily mean that a person must have memorized a great portion of the scripture or be a Greek scholar or anything of this sort. In working with the Brazilian people at the present time because of their basic lack of great amounts of education such as we have here in the States, a young person who is a college graduate on an average will have quite a bit more education than the average Brazilian. Brazil still has some 35% illiteracy.

A young person then, as well as having a good Bible background, should have language study to prepare him to go into the field in to which he is to go in. It could be that the individual who has thought about going to the mission field does not have the necessary aptitude for learning a foreign language. There are aptitude tests available now.

Huffard: I understand you are ready to administer them.

Rose: Yes. At 7:30 this evening we have some who will be taking an aptitude test.

Huffard: Is there any other thing about the training you think you would like to advise for young people?

Rose: When a young person goes to a foreign language field, he should go prepared to do no religious work until he has learned the language. If he will find a top grade teacher, someone who is very well qualified at a recognized school and schedule as much language study as he can take, then in 3 to 5 months time he can begin his work and have his language behind him. Whereas if a person drags his language out over a year or a year and a half or perhaps even as much as two years, then language is always a problem and something always interferes with scheduling, cottage classes and other things that need to be done later on.

Huffard: About your own training, what would you say was most helpful to you?

Rose: I think the thing most helpful to me was being from a Christian home, having Christian parents who always took me to Bible class and church so that I have what I consider to be a fairly good comprehension of the New Testament church and what Christianity is.

Huffard: Is there any other remark that you might want to make concerning the work there in a general way before we close?

Rose: I would like to say that I feel that young people who are graduating from college have a number of advantages which old people who would consider going to the

mission field do not have. This is one of the basic reasons that we recruit on college campuses rather than encouraging families to come and do the follow up type work. When a person leaves college and begins a job here in the United States, gets married, he soon incurs debts and gets other roots, you might call it, attachments, problems, etc. that become harder and harder to overcome and especially when you think of completely leaving everything behind and going to a foreign country that might be five or ten thousand miles away. A person coming out of college does not have all of these attachments or debts that would tie him down later on. Another thing in regard to going to a foreign language situation, the older a person becomes, the more difficult it becomes for him to learn a foreign language. You know that a child that is four or five years old can learn a language much quicker than a person who is 20. A person who is 20 can learn it much quicker than a person who is 40. These are two advantages that I think are very important.

Huffard: What future plans are there in regard to the work?

Rose: I mentioned earlier that some 25 small congregations have been established. We are at the present considering moving the follow up base out of the city of Sao Paulo to another city which would be in the geographical center of these other 25 locations. It would give us several advantages. One would be that our living expenses would be considerably less than what they are in Sao Paulo. Sao Paulo is not a cheap place to live by any standard. It is 95% of Washington, D. C.'s living expenses. This city which is 100,000 would give us less expenses, which, of course, would require raising less money to come to the mission field. Also it would put us much closer to what we are actually doing and would put almost every congregation within a 100-mile radius of where we would be living so we could drive, fly or ride a bus in almost any direction in two or three hours and be at our destination. This, of course, would be awfully time saving as well. We would be able to spend much more time with the people instead of actual travel which we are having to do now. The city which would be the geographical center where the work is presently located would be a natural radiating point, I feel, for these other areas.

Huffard: David, it certainly has been good to have your story recorded on Harding College's Living History of Missions series. We do wish the Lord's blessings upon you and your work.